

To: Lead Food Officers
cc: REHIS, COSLA, SFELC

22 December 2015

FSS/ENF/15/016

Dear Colleague

Enforcement Action Relating to Analysis of Added Sugars in Honey by NMR Methods

Please note Food Standards Scotland's advice in relation to enforcement action following analysis for possible exogenous C3 sugars in honey by NMR methods.

Issue

In some instances a 1H or proton nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) method is being used to screen honey for added (or exogenous) sugars, including from C3 plants such as beet sugar or sugar syrups. This screening method gives indicative results and does not definitively prove that added sugar is present. FSS's advice is that no enforcement action should be taken in relation to the NMR results alone with regards to added sugar at the present time, while we await the results of work to be undertaken by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre – Institute for Reference Materials and Measurements (JRC-IRMM).

Background

Detection of added sugar in honey can be very challenging and is limited by the availability of current validated methods of analysis, particularly in relation to adulteration with sugars derived from C3 plants, such as sugar beet. FSS is aware that JRC-IRMM is planning to use advanced laboratory methods in its follow up work to look for sugar adulteration in a set of samples collected

as part of a European control plan.¹ It has been indicated that JRC-IRMM will include NMR as one of those methods.

The report of this work is expected by July 2016. There is the potential for JRC to establish a method, or methods, that may be adopted under Article 4 of Council Directive 2001/110/EC relating to honey. Article 4 allows the European Commission to adopt methods to permit verification of compliance of honey with the provisions of the Directive and, where methods have not been adopted, for Member States to use validated, internationally recognised methods.

If you have any queries on this, please contact me at the email address at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely



Jacqui Angus
Senior Enforcement Manager
Food Standards Scotland

¹ For further information see
http://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/official_controls/food_fraud/honey/qandas/index_en.htm